

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 066 356

SO 002 416

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TITLE Population Study in the Secondary School Curriculum.
PUB DATE Nov 65
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the annual meeting, National Council for the Social Studies, November 1965
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Design; *Curriculum Development; Curriculum Planning; *Population Education; Secondary Grades; *Social Studies; Speeches

ABSTRACT

Several aspects of the curriculum problem are considered here. The first, Scope of Population Study, attempts to provide a general delimitation of the field by identifying overlapping and related areas of study. A second aspect, Goals of Population Study, identifies three general goals: 1) development of an understanding of the significance of population characteristics as a basic factor in a number of social problems; 2) preparation for decisions as to size of family to be made by students in the future; 3) preparation for consideration of and action toward public policy issues directly related to population concerns. A third consideration, The Curriculum Context of Population Study, discusses the four general strategies for curriculum innovation, and points out which ones are most desirable and feasible. In addition, ways in which population study would complement certain areas of the present social studies curriculum are noted (for example, in area studies, economics, history, community studies, and geography). In the fourth section of the paper, Resources for population Study, specific instructional resources are briefly noted. Finally, Problems and Issues in Teaching Population points out difficulties which are common to any effort at introducing a new area or expanding an existing one. (Author/JLB)

ED 066356

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POPULATION STUDY IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Presented at National Council of Social Studies Meeting
November 1965

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POPULATION STUDY IN THE
SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Sloan R. Wayland

The Chairman of this section, Professor Erling Hunt, in his introductory article in the book, High School Social Studies Perspectives, notes that "One result of the unique elements in our social studies program is that the social studies include controversial subjects and become subject to many organized pressures. A further result is that we must constantly check our perspectives and adjust our instruction to new knowledge, new social needs, and new instructional materials." In the spirit of this injunction this session on population is being presented since in this country and in many other parts of the world the significance of population has become much more generally appreciated.

Indicators of this change may be seen at many points. In academia, new or expanded centers for population studies may be found at Harvard, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago, the University of California at Berkeley, Florida State University, the University of North Carolina, Notra Dame University, and the University of Pennsylvania. Population specialists are now assigned to American staffs in embassies in many parts of the world. The USAID program is authorized to render certain types of assistance to countries requesting help. The activities of the United Nations have been expanded.

An exploration of the factors which have given rise to this change in interest is beyond the scope of our interest here. However, the manifestations of concern focus on a number of different points. Some people are concerned with the assessments of rates of change in order to more adequately plan for the consequences; some are concerned about the depletion of limited resources which exist in limited or fixed quantities; others are concerned about the rate of growth but have no general concern about growth in size, in general. Another group is concerned about differential rates of growth of various sub-groups as compared with others, and still another group is disturbed about that segment of the total population who are having more children than the parents want to have. Still other groups or combinations of groups might be identified.

Given the increase in the public interest in this field, an exploration of the possible contribution of the school system to this area of the field is inevitable. And this rising interest has come at a point in time when, as Dr. Berelson pointed out in his article in The Social Studies and the Social Sciences, "The need for detailed consideration of the social studies curriculum in the secondary school appears to be so clear that it hardly requires extended argument."

In this brief paper, several aspects of the curriculum problem will be considered. (1) What is the scope of population study? (2) What are the basic goals which might be achieved through attention to population? (3) relationship of instruction in population to other aspects of the curriculum in social studies and in other fields; (4) resource materials for development of such instruction; and (5) problems and issues associated with teaching population. In this brief paper these five points cannot be developed in detail.

Scope of Population Study

A full and formal definition of the population field with clear boundary lines will not be attempted here. The terms demography and human geography are sometimes used, as well as population, to refer to the discipline in which the numbers of human beings are considered in relation to vital processes--births and deaths--and to a set of structural variables some of which are biological, such as age and sex and some of which are sociological, such as marital status and occupation.

As another means of setting the limits around the area of study, an identification of the fields which are not involved (at least as the terms are being used here) may be of value. For example, means of birth control, sex education, family life education and similar fields are outside of the discipline of population, even though these fields do touch the population field tangentially. This problem will be considered in more detail in a later section of this paper. At this point in the discussion, the field of population as a discipline is being emphasized in order to make clear that attention to population may be given in such a manner as to serve all students in public and private school systems without risk of raising some of the moral or ethical questions involved in the fields which have been noted as being outside of the discipline of population.

Goals of Population Study

The identification of the goals of population study can be made on a number of different levels. In the discussion here, the goals will be stated in general terms while recognizing that much more specific statements of goals would be necessary in order for curriculum decisions to be made. Although the goals will be somewhat general, the discussion of the goals will be in sufficient detail to indicate to a degree the scope of each. Three goals will be so identified.

(1) Development of an understanding of the significance of population characteristics as a basic factor in a number of social problems, both domestic and foreign.

(2) Preparation for decisions as to size of family to be made by students when they establish their own families.

(3) Preparation for consideration of and action toward public policy issues directly related to population concerns.

Significance of Population Characteristics: In the first paper by Dr. Berelson, a number of factors of relevance here were considered. Such basic factors as rate of growth of the population of a country, the age structure, the sex ratio, the dependency rate, the level of infant mortality, the rates of migration and the selectivity in the migration, age at marriage, age specific birth rates, and size of families, are some of the characteristics of the population which may help to explain certain types of social phenomena which on the surface do not seem to be related directly to such factors. Several examples will be given below.

In the past few years, considerable publicity has been given to the increase in crime rates. At best, data on crimes are very difficult to analyze because the crime rates do not refer to the incidence of crime but to the reported cases, and data on persons refer to those who are officially booked. For this reason, crime data have to be handled with great care. For our purposes here, however, the point at issue is the significance of the age structure. With the relatively higher proportion as well as absolute number of people in the age levels where reported crimes occur with the greatest frequency, what appears to be a change in the crime rate is, in fact, in many communities no real change in rate. Such a statement is of no comfort to the law enforcement officer, but it does make unnecessary and irrelevant a number of elaborate theses by those who assume that the new generation is quite different from previous generations.

Another and related problem grows out of the general age structure. The changes in the patterns of reproduction during the twenties and the thirties from the patterns in the past two decades have resulted in a general age structure characterized by a relatively large young population with a relatively smaller adult population. The social institutions developed for the previous generation, which was relatively small, did not fit the new situation, and some of the social disorganization which has come about has been due to this shift in the ratio of adults to young people.

A quite different problem is that of the current urban problems. Basic patterns of internal migration are, of course, of great significance for this set of problems. Furthermore, absolute numbers of people in a given geographic unit poses similar problems, whether the unit is New York City or Bombay. The individual is the same size in both places, and the street scene is frequently the same in both places if one disregards the externalappings.

For many of our communities, the rate of growth of the population, or certain segments of it, is back of many of the problems being faced. Orderly and careful development of community facilities has been difficult because adequate lead time was not available.

These few illustrations are designed to suggest that the consideration of many matters of public concern have a significant population dimension, so that greater understanding of population dynamics is important.

Family size of present student population: Factors influencing family size are numerous. With the greater levels of knowledge about means for family planning--whether by abstinence, rhythm, or other means--family

planning is easier to implement than was true in earlier periods. With the large post-war generation now finishing school and moving into the marriage age, a very important period for the future of the population is now upon us. The decisions of the current generation about such matters as age of marriage, timing of first and last child, and total size of family will be very influential on the population structure of the United States for a very long period of time.

Given the importance of such decisions, a full awareness of the nature of the population problem would seem to be of major importance. The decisions which are made ought to be based on both the family and the social consequences of family size.

Attitudes toward public policy issues: In the years ahead, a number of issues related to population matters will be before the public for decision. In recent years, several of these problems have come to the fore, including family planning as a public health service in the United States, the assisting of nations in the field of family planning through our technical assistance program, the increased urgency for action on air and water pollution as a function of the size and concentration of people in a limited geographic area, and the need for action to set up park lands and recreation sites as the size of the population reduces the possibility of dealing with this on an informal basis.

These issues and a number of others will be the subject for action by private and public groups and agencies in the years ahead. And an understanding of population dynamics is basic to rational action in such areas.

The three general goals identified above do not exhaust the outcomes which might be derived from the study of population, but they do indicate the scope and direction of the outcomes which may be expected. Some of the problems involved in attaining these goals will be considered in the sections which follow.

The Curriculum Context of Population Study

The third aspect of the curricular problem is the relationship of instruction in population to other aspects of the curriculum in social studies, and in other areas of instruction. Four general strategies for curriculum innovation may be identified as a basis for the consideration of increased attention to population problems: (1) Establish a new course; (2) Avoid a special course, but seek to gain a level of understanding and commitment on the part of teachers so that the new field of study comes in at many places, that is, it permeates the existing curriculum; (3) Develop special units which take the place of certain existing units without serious modification of the curriculum; and (4) Restructure the curriculum, e.g., the social studies curriculum, so that the new field of study finds its place in a new pattern.

The first two of these four strategies are not ones which seem appropriate or feasible, although trial efforts employing these strategies might be worth exploring. However, given the great time pressure under which students and staff now work, these two are not likely to be acceptable.

The third strategy--the special unit--has some appeal, but it does create a special problem for the teacher who has not been trained in this field, and the development of pre-service and in-service training programs poses some difficult problems. In addition, the problem of how such a unit fits in with other aspects of the social studies curriculum has to be solved.

This third pattern is, in a certain sense, the strategy which is being employed by the American Sociological Association in its development of what are being called teaching episodes. In this project, several different episodes are being developed in the field of population, and these episodes are seen as self-contained units which might be covered in one to two weeks, within whatever course the teacher chooses to use them. This program of the American Sociological Association is being presented in another section of this meeting.

In connection with a project sponsored by The Population Council, a document has been developed at Teachers College, Columbia University, entitled, Teaching Population Dynamics, which a number of social studies teachers in the United States have requested because they were interested in developing a teaching unit in this field. This document was developed as prototype instructional materials for the information and guidance of educators in developing countries where deep concern has been expressed about various aspects of the population problem. This document is addressed primarily to the teacher and is designed to provide basic background data and concepts, together with a series of projects which teachers might employ in teaching the field. Since the location of instruction in population in the curriculum of a developing country, and the special types of instructional materials needed to implement such instruction, are determined by Ministries of Education, the prototype materials presented were, of necessity, not designed for one level, one subject area, or even one country. For purposes of illustration, data on India was used throughout the document. Comparative data from a series of selected countries were used in one section to provide perspective about the problems being faced in any one country.

In connection with the project just referred to, visits were made to a number of countries in many parts of the world, to explore what they are now teaching with reference to population. Although great interest was expressed by educators in most of the countries visited, relatively little is being taught other than current status data in geography courses. No significant difference was found in those countries with explicit family planning programs and those without such programs.

The fourth strategy--location of population study in a reconstructed social studies curriculum--may seem to be a more promising approach, but again a number of problems are involved. At other sessions during this conference, discussion of these new designs will take place. From an examination of those proposals which have come to my attention, the field of population does not seem to receive any greater attention than it has in the past. A persistent problem in such programs is the extremely difficult task of determining what is to be included, and what is to be left out in a restricted time allocation in which history, geography and the behavioral sciences are all seeking adequate attention.

Add to this the various interest groups who want their special concerns to receive appropriate attention, and the problem becomes almost unmanageable.

No resolution of this general problem is to be proposed here. The purpose of this paper is to emphasize, as others have in the past, that this field is one which merits serious attention, and that its importance increases year by year.

An exhaustive notation of the manner in which population study might complement the areas of the present social studies curriculum and other aspects of the curriculum will not be presented here. However, a few selective points will illustrate the point:

Area Studies: significance of rate of growth, age structure, and internal migration as basic elements in the modernization process.

Economics: relationship of age and occupational structure to manpower resources and development.

Community Studies: population dynamics as a basic factor in the historical development of communities, a tool for analysis of the current characteristics, and as a background factor in contemporary issues in communities.

History: significance of rate of growth, migration patterns, shifts in age structure and changes in total size of population, and of the size of significant subgroups as elements in the study of particular periods as factors leading to change.

Geography: population dynamics as a major feature of human and economic geography.

In aspects of the curriculum other than social studies, population study is also relevant. For those schools offering programs in family life education or sex education, a general understanding of population dynamics will lend perspectives to these fields. The same result may be expected for those students taking courses in biology which deal with the field of human reproduction.

This sketchy review is not intended to support the permeation of strategy but rather to suggest that systematic attention at some point will not only serve to attain the general goals discussed above, but also will aid in achieving the goals of other aspects of the curriculum. Attention should perhaps be called to the increasing concern in the American public with the area of family planning as it relates to the school system. This is being introduced at the end of this section in order to emphasize the point that instruction in population can be fruitfully considered without reference to family planning. However, a recent Gallup survey, published in May of this year, reported that 69 per cent of the adults approved of giving courses in sex education in the schools, and 46 per cent approved of courses discussing birth control. The National Academy of Science has recently urged that the school systems in the United States discuss family planning. The Planned Parenthood-World Population organization has recently reported that they are receiving a marked increase in the request for materials for use in classes where population problems are being discussed.

The reference to the area of family planning is being made at this point to indicate the possibility for a general unit in which the biological, and social science aspects of population would be integrated into one unit. Given the present discipline emphasis in secondary schools, this approach is not likely to be viewed favorably by many educators. However, this review would not be complete without noting this pattern which has in fact been used in some schools.

Resources for Population Study

In an earlier section of this paper, reference was made to some of the work in which we are engaged at Teachers College. In the years ahead we expect to have more materials which may be of interest to American teachers, although our major focus is on education in other parts of the world.

For a continuing source of materials which will aid the teacher in his work in the field of population, the Population Reference Bureau at 1755 Massachusetts Avenue, Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20036, issues a Population Bulletin eight times a year. A recent paperback book, entitled Population: The Vital Revolution, edited by Ronald Freedman, has been issued by Anchor Books in 1964; another interesting document, entitled The Population Problem, may be obtained from the Department of Program Utilization, National Educational Television, at 10 Columbus Circle, New York, New York 10019. This document was prepared to accompany a series of six television productions sponsored by National Education Television.

Any materials which any of you develop which you think might be of interest to other educators would be welcomed at Teachers College.

Problems and Issues in Teaching Population

At a number of points in the earlier sections of this paper, some of the problems and issues involved in teaching population were identified. These will not be repeated here in detail. Many of the problems are those which are to be found in any effort at introducing a new area or expanding an area which has been receiving limited attention.

The comments above should not be interpreted to mean that no attention is given to population in the current curriculum of American schools. However, a review of textbooks now in current use indicated that the attention is very limited outside of very general materials in geography texts and in a few of the Problems of American Democracy texts. The extensive use of special materials other than texts by social studies teachers makes this source of information about current teaching incomplete.

In the development of new programs the classic problems of well conceived teaching units, teachers prepared to teach such units, teachers interested in teaching such units, adequate resource materials for students and teachers, and a curriculum framework within which to fit such a unit have to be considered. With the current ferment regarding the

social studies curriculum, many areas which have not been receiving attention will be receiving serious consideration. The study of population should be added to this list since it seems to me to include the characteristics which need to be taken into account in making the hard decisions about what should be in the social studies curriculum.